

Or elles list no swich dispence endure,
But thynketh it is wasted and ylost,
Thanne moot another payen for oure cost,
Or lene us gold, and that is perilous.

HIS noble marchaunt heeld a worthy hous,
for which he hadde alday so greet repair
for his largesse, and for his wyf was fair,
That wonder is; but herkne to my tale.

Amonges alle his gestes, grete and smale,
Ther was a monk, a fair man and a boold,
I trowe of thirty wynter he was oold,
That evere in oon was comynge to that place.
This yonge monk, that was so fair of face,
Hqueynted was so with the goode man
Sith that hir firste knoweliche bigan,
That in his hous as famulier was he
As it possible is any freend to be.

And for as muchel as this goode man
And eek this monk, of which that I bigan,
Were bothe two yborn in o village,
The monk hym claymeth as for cosynage;
And he agayn, he seith nat ones nay,
But was as glad therof as fowel of day;
for to his herte it was a greet plesauce.
Thus been they knyght with eterne alliaunce,
And ech of hem gan oother for tassure
Of bretherhede, whil that hir lyf may dure.

Free was Daun John, and namely of dispence,
As in that hous; and ful of diligence
To doon plesauce, and also greet costage.
He noght forgat to yeve the leeste page
In al that hous, but after hir degree.
He yaf the lord, and sitthe al his meyne,
Whan that he cam, som manere honest thyng,
for which they were as glad of his comyng
As fowel is fayn whan that the sonne upriseth;
Na moore of this as now, for it suffiseth.

But so bifel, this marchant on a day
Shoop hym to make redy his array
Toward the toun of Brugges for to fare,
To byen there a porcioun of ware;
for which he hath to Darys sent anon
A messenger, and preyed hath Daun John
That he sholde come to Seint Denys to pleye
With hym and with his wyf a day or tweye,
Er he to Brugges wente, in alle wise.

HIS noble monk, of which I yow devyse,
Hath of his abbot, as hym list, licence,
Bycause he was a man of heigh prudence,
And eek an officer, out for to ryde,
To seen hir graunges and hire bernys wyde;
And unto Seint Denys he comth anon.
Who was so welcome as my lord Daun John,
Oure deere cosyn, ful of curteisye?
With hym broghte he a jubbe of malvesye
And eek another, ful of fyn vernage,
And volatyl, as ay was his usage.
And thus I lete hem ete and drynke and pleye,
This marchant and this monk, a day or tweye.

The thridde day, this marchant up ariseth,
And on his nedes sadly hym avyseth,
And up into his countour/hous gooth he,
To rekene with hymself, as wel may be,

Of thilke yeer, how that it with him stood,
And how that he despended hadde his good;
And if that he encressed were or noon.
His bookes and his bagges many oon
He leith biforn hym on his countyng/bord,
ful riche was his tresor and his bord,
for which ful faste his countour/dore he shette;
And eek he nolde that no man sholde hym lette
Of his accountes, for the meene tyme;
And thus he sit til it was passed pryme.

Daun John was risen in the morwe also,
And in the gardyn walketh to and fro,
And hath his thynges seyde ful curteisly,
This goode wyf cam walkinge pryvely
Into the gardyn, there he walketh softe,
And hym saleweth, as she hath doon ofte.
A mayde child cam in hire compaignye,
Which as hir list she may governe and gye,
for yet under the yerde was the mayde.

O deere cosyn myn, Daun John, she sayde,
What cyleth yow, so rathe for to ryse?
Neece, quod he, it oghte ynough suffise
fyve houres for to slepe upon a nyght,
But it were for an old appalled wight,
As been thise wedded men, that lye and dare
As in a fourme sit a wery hare,
Were al forstraught with houndes grete & smale.

But deere nece, why be ye so pale?
I trowe certes that oure goode man
Hath yow laboured sith the nyght bigan,
That yow were nede to resten hastily,
And with that word he lough ful muryly,
And of his owene thought he wex al reed.

This faire wyf gan for to shake hir heed,
And seyde thus: Ye, God woot al, quod she;
Nay, cosyn myn, it stant nat so with me,
for, by that God that yaf me soule and lyf,
In al the reawme of france is ther no wyf
That lasse lust hath to that sory pleye.
for I may synge Alias and weylaway
That I was born; but to no wight, quod she,
Dar I nat telle how that it stant with me.
Wherefore I thynke out of this land to wende,
Or elles of myself to make an ende,
So ful am I of drede and eek of care.

HIS monk bigan upon this wyf to stare,
And seyde, Alias, my nece, God forbode
That ye, for any sorwe or any drede,
fordo youreself; but tel me of youre grief;
Paraventure I may, in youre meschief,
Conseille or helpe; and therfore telleth me
Al youre anoy, for it shal been secree;
for on my porthors here I make an ooth
That nevere in my lyf, for lief ne looth,
Ne shal I of no conseil yow biwreie.

The same agayn to yow, quod she, I seye;
By God and by this porthors, I yow swere,
Though men me wolde al into pieces tere,
Ne shal I nevere, for to goon to helle,
Biwreie a word of thyng that ye me telle,
Nat for no cosynage ne alliaunce,
But verrailly for love and affiaunce.

Thus been they sworn, & heerupon they kiste,

And ech of hem tolde oother what hem liste.
Cosyn, quod she, if that I hadde a space,
As I have noon, and namely in this place,
Thanne wolde I telle a legende of my lyf,
What I have suffred sith I was a wyf
With myn housbonde, al be he youre cosyn.

Nay, quod this monk, by God & Seint Martyn!
He is na moore cosyn unto me
Than is this lief that hangeth on the tree.
I clepe hym so, by Seint Denys of fraunce!
To have the moore cause of aqueyntaunce
Of yow, which I have loved specially,
Above alle wommen sikely;
This swere I yow on my professioun.
Telleth youre grief lest that he come adoun,
And hasteth yow, and gooth youre wey anon.

Y deere love, quod she, O my Daun John,
ful lief were me this conseil for to hyde,
But out it moot, I may namoore abyde.
Myn housbonde is to me the worst man
That evere was, sith that the world bigan.

But sith I am a wyf, it sit nat me
To tellen no wight of oure privetee,
Neither a bedde, ne in noon oother place;
God shilde I sholde it tellen, for his grace!
A wyf ne shal nat seyn of hir housbonde
But al honour, as I kan understonde;
Save unto yow, this mucche I tellen shal;
As helpe me God, he is noght worth at al
In no degree the value of a flye;
But yet me greveth moost his nygardye.
And wel ye woot that wommen naturelly
Desiren thynges sixe, as wel as I:
They wolde that hir housbondes sholde be
hardy and wise, and riche, and therto free,
And buxom to his wyf, and fressh abedde.
But, by that ilke Lord that for us bledde,
for his honour, myself for to arraye,
A Sunday next, I moste nedes paye
An hundred frankes, or ellis I am lorn;
Yet were me levere that I were unborn
Than me were doon a sclandre or vileynye;
And if myn housbonde eek it myghte espye,
Inere but lost, and therfore I yow preye,
Lene me this somme, or ellis moot I deye.
Daun John, I seye, lene me thise hundred frankes;
Pardee, I wol nat faille yow my thanks,
If that yow list to doon that I yow praye;
for at a certeyn day I wol yow paye,
And doon to yow what plesance and servise
That I may doon, right as yow list devise.
And but I do, God take on me vengeance
As foul as evere hadde Genyloun of france!

HIS gentil monk answerde in this manere:
Now trewely, myn owene lady deere,
I have, quod he, on yow so greet a routhe,
That I yow swere, and plighte yow my trouthe,
That whan youre housbonde is to flaundes fare,
I wol delyvere yow out of this care;
for I wol brynge yow an hundred frankes.
And with that word he caught hire by the flankes,
And hire embraceth harde, and kiste hire ofte.
Gooth now youre wey, quod he, al stille & softe,

And lat us dyne as soone as that ye may;
for by my chilyndre it is pryme of day.
Gooth now, and beeth as trewe as I shal be.
Now, elles God forbode, sire, quod she;
And forth she gooth, as jolif as a pye,
And bad the cookes that they sholde hem hye,
So that men myghte dyne, and that anon.
Up to hir housbonde is this wyf ygon,
And knokketh at his countour boldely.
Who is ther? quod he, Peter! it am I.
Quod she; what, sire, how longe wol ye faste?
How longe tyme wol ye rekene and caste
Yoursommes, & youre bookes, & youre thynges?
The devel have part on alle swiche rekenynges!
Ye have ynough, pardee, of Goddes sonde;
Com down today, and lat youre bagges stonde.
Ne be ye nat ashamed that Daun John
Shal fasting al this day elenge goon?
What! lat us heere a messe, and go we dyne.

Yf, quod this man, litel kanstow devyne
The curious bisynesse that we have;
for of us chapmen, also God me save,
And by that lord that clepid is Seint Yve,
Scarsly amonges twelve, ten shul thryve
Continuelly, lastyngge unto oure age.
We may wel make chiere and good visage,
And dryve forth the world as it may be,
And hepen oure estaat in pryvetee
Til we be deed; or elles that we pleye
A pilgrymage, or goon out of the weye.
And therfore have I greet necessitee
Upon this queynte world tavyse me;
for everemoore we moote stonde in drede
Of hap and fortune in oure chapmanhede.
To flaundes wol I go to morwe at day,
And come agayn, as soone as evere I may,
for which, my deere wyf, I thee biseke
As be to every wight buxom and meke,
And for to kepe oure good be curious,
And honestly governe wel oure hous.
Thou hast ynough in every maner wise,
That to a thrifty houshold may suffise;
Thee lakketh noon array ne no vitaille,
Of silver in thy purs shaltow nat faille.

And with that word his countour/dore he shette,
And doon he gooth, no lenger wolde he lette;
But hastily a messe was ther seyde,
And spedily the tables were pleyed,
And to the dyner faste they hem spedde,
And richely this monk the chapman fedde.

After dyner Daun John sobrelly
This chapman took apart, and prively
He seyde hym thus: Cosyn, it standeth so,
That wel I see to Brugges wol ye go.
God and Seint Austyn spede yow and gyde!
I prey yow, cosyn, wisely that ye ryde;
Govermeth yow also of youre diete
Atemprely, and namely in this hete.
Bitwix us two nedeth no strange fare;
farewel cosyn, God shilde yow fro care.
If anythyng ther be by day or nyght,
If it lye in my power and my myght,
That ye me wol comande in any wyse,